

Lord, Give Us Filters Today for What We Will Hear Tomorrow

James 3:13-18

The Book of James #7

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault. And it will be given to him. So teach us to number our days, O Lord our God, so that we may get a heart of wisdom.

In the annals of history, there lives a man who was - by all accounts in his day - the paragon of a wise, virtuous, and deeply religious statesman. War and combat, he reasoned, was the demonstrative proof that human beings have “gutter capacities” when their way of life gets threatened, especially by bullies. So the solution to any crisis, he reasoned, was not joining the biggest bully on the block in the gutter by using force. It was going to the gutter to reason with the bully instead in the “spirit of collaboration and goodwill.” So in 1938, Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, boarded a plane to Germany to meet Adolph Hitler at Berchtesgaden, the German Chancellor’s private mountain retreat to save the world through appeasement. The conversation went something like this: “Mr. Hitler, kind sir, you want Czechoslovakia? You can have it. But you have to promise me you won’t take anymore European land.” You know the rest of the story, well. Hitler crossed his fingers behind his back while telling the British Prime Minister: “I pinky promise.” When the news broke in Great Brittan that Chamberlain and Hitler had signed the Munich Pact, the people of England – including those in Body of Christ - hailed Prime Minister Chamberlain as Brittan’s version of King Solomon. He didn’t mind the comparison either, especially when the cameras were flashing. Within six months, Germany invaded Poland and Brittan was at war. What appeared to world as wisdom from above turned out to be wisdom from below.

In the annals of history, there also lives a man who was – by all accounts in his day – the paragon of an uncultured, unsophisticated, and unwise fool. He lacked decorum. Nancy Astor, the first woman in British Parliament (who also happened to be born in the United States) once said to him: “Mr. Winston Churchill, if I was married to you, I would put arsenic in your tea.” To which he responded: “Nancy, if I was married to you, I would drink it.” He slept till noon. Smoked cigars in No Smoking Sections. And did most of his work locked in the bathroom because he didn’t like his secretary. The people of England – including those in the Body of Christ – wanted him out of public life altogether because the way he presented himself made them fearful that Great Brittan would become the laughingstock and scourge of Europe. But Churchill, recognized one thing the rest of the British Parliament and the Church of England did not the only way to deal with the gutter bully is resolute defiance, not naïve appeasement. Had God not smiled on the flawed human being who became Prime Minister of Great Brittan during WW2, that great nation and ally would now be part of the Third Reich. What appeared to the world as wisdom from below turned out to be wisdom from above.

People of God, I want to tell you unashamedly and unapologetically this morning that there are two types of wisdom: the wisdom that comes from below and the wisdom that comes from above. And sometimes the wisdom that looks like it comes from above might actually be coming from below. And conversely, the wisdom that looks it comes from below might actually be coming from above. Therefore, the time to develop your wisdom filter is right now. Russia has just invaded the Ukraine. China will most likely invade Taiwan. Iran is doing everything in its power to weaponize in order to invade Saudi Arabia. And this week we’ve gotten closer to another World War than at any time since September 2, 1945. Over the next few months, you’ll hear statesman heralded as wise and preachers heralded as prophets pontificating about our futures and the futures of our children. So today I thought I’d take the opportunity from the Book of James to teach you about how to develop your wisdom filter so that you can be thoroughly discerning in the days ahead. Turn with me to James as we read 3:13-18.

¹³ *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.* ¹⁴ *But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.* ¹⁵ *Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* ¹⁶ *For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.* ¹⁷ *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.* ¹⁸ *Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

Developing Your Wisdom Filter Today for What You Will Hear Tomorrow Requires:

1. The Inside to Outside Test (13, 14)

- **Austin, Minnesota** – (1) Is home to about 24,000 people; (2) It's a blip on a map dot; (3) But something happened there so great that it was enough to change the world: from the lakes of Minnesota and from sea to shining sea. (4) It happened in 1937 when Jay Hormel figured out how to preserve a pork shoulders and ham and put them in a can so they will never perish from the earth. (5) Those shoulders of pork and ham in a can is called SPAM. (6) The contents inside this can have fed millions because it never spoils. (7) So Hormel is about to make a new batch after all these years.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** What's in the heart will always manifest itself through lifestyle and choices. Always.
- **Wisdom from Above:** (1) Always manifests itself through meekness (gentleness, humility[NIV]). (2) What meekness isn't: a weak person who is always nice. (3) What it is: strength under control. (3) The type of wisdom that comes from someone who exhibits strength/courage/conviction/advice that's under control is worth paying attention to.
- **Wisdom from Below:** (1) Always two motives driving it: envy and selfish ambition; (2) Envy is the desire to have an attribute or thing that belongs to someone else. The implication is that if you are prone to envy, don't dole out spiritual advise...or receive it from envious people. It doesn't come from God. (3) Selfish ambition = to put one's foot forward while lacking gentleness and humility that should go with it. (4) That doesn't help any situation. It makes it worse because such an individual is "ambitious" enough to insert themselves into the narrative and make it about himself/herself.
- **App:** Your first question when it comes to evaluating what you hear is this: is this person projecting strength under control? Do they take their own advice that leads to a Godly lifestyle? If not, such wisdom does not come from God.

2. The Conflict Test (16; 18)

- **Superman:** (1) I heard a song some time ago about Superman that more people in our world need to listen to. (2) It chorus goes like this: "Superman never made any money. Saving the world from Solomon Grundy. And sometimes I despair the world will never see another man like him." (3) He always finds himself in conflict with folks like Lex Luther, Solomon Grundy, and the Florida Skunk Ape ; but he's never the cause of it. (4) He would prefer to still be on the clock at the Dailey Planet as Clark Kent. (5) But instead he makes it his point to fly straight into the most dangerous situation imaginable in order to bring resolution. And then disappears anonymously without bowing. (6) That's why you don't find many men like him
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Some people get involved in conflict because of selfish ambition and envy. Others get involved in conflict to bring peace by standing up to bullies. You therefore must ask: "who are the parties involved in the conflict and why?"
- **Wisdom that Comes from Below:** (1) Envy and selfish ambition always manifests itself in disorder and every evil practice. (2) Chaos breaks out in a church, business, nation and a world when personal issues, bailiwicks and partisan causes become more important than the good of the whole.
- **Wisdom that Comes from Above:** (1) Always manifests itself in being a peacemaker; (2) What a peace maker is not: a passive individual who tries to please both sides; (3) What a peace maker is: one who, like an eagle, flies straight into the storm cloud to bring resolution to a conflict.
- **App:** In every conflict, there are peacemakers and peacebreakers. The former walk in the wisdom from God. The others walk in the wisdom that comes from below.

3. The Kingdom Test (15, 17)

- **The Lord's Prayer for Teenagers:** (1) *Our Father, who art in the den. Falling asleep again. Thy payday come. Thy will be done. Until thy back is turned. Give us this day, our weekly allowances. And lead us not to the time-out corner. But deliver to us, from the pizza parlor, two large pepperoni and one medium Hawaiian. Forgive us our back-talk, although we have never forgiven anyone for back-talking us. For thine is the house and the car and the money. Until we all graduate and get jobs and homes of our own. Amen.*
- **Main Idea of the Point:** True wisdom that comes from God is Kingdom centered. Conversely, wisdom that comes from below is earthly, unspiritual and demonic.
- **Wisdom from Below:** (1) Earthly, unspiritual and demonic = based on principles of the world and what the world values; (2) 1 John 2:16: For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

- **Wisdom from Above:** (1) Is pure as heaven is pure. (2) It's peace-loving as heaven is peace-loving. (3). It's considerate as heaven is considerate. (4). It's submissive as we submit to the Father who art in heaven. (5) It's full of mercy and good fruit as it is in heaven.
- **App:** Will the advice I follow lead to better understand that which art in heaven?

4. The Dispenser Test (17b)

- **The Judge:** (1) Once upon a time, there was a prosecuting attorney that was going to town on a witness in a political corruption trial during cross examination; (2) "Isn't it true, sir, that you've accepted 5 thousand dollars to compromise this case." (3) The witness said nothing, so he asked the question again. (4) Isn't it true, sir, that you've accepted 5 thousand dollars to compromise this case." (5) The witness still said nothing, looking out the window. (6) So the judge pipped in: "sir, you need to answer the question." (7) To which the witness, responded: "I'm sorry, your honor. I didn't answer because I thought he was talking to you." (8) We expect the wisdom to flow from the legal bench to be impartial. That's why we say "tell it to the judge." (9) It works the same way spiritually.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Wisdom from above will always be impartial and sincere. Wisdom from below will be partial and insincere.
- **Wisdom from Below:** Shows partiality. Partiality means to prefer one party in a dispute over another. And it's insincere. Insincerity means the person offering advice lacks empathy or concern for your plight.
- **Wisdom from Above:** Exactly the opposite.
- **App:** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 Jn 4:1)...and, brothers and sisters, they will absolutely be speaking.